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## CLARENCE.

BY BRET HARTE.

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PART I.

CHAPTER I.

As Clarence Brant, president of the Robles Land company and husband of the rich widow of John Peyton of the Robles ranch, mingled with the outgoing audience of the Cosmopolitan theatre at San Francisco, he elicited the usual smiling nods and recognition due to his good looks and good fortune. But as he hurriedly slipped through the still lingering winter's rain into the smart coupe that was awaiting him and gave the order, "home," the word struck him with a peculiarly ironical significance.

His home was a handsome one, and lacked nothing in appointment and comfort, but he had gone to the theatre to evade its hollow loneliness. Nor was it because his wife was not there, for he had a miserable consciousness that the temporary absence had nothing to do with his homelessness.

The distraction of the theatre over, the dull, vague, but aching sense of loneliness daily growing upon him, returned with greater vigor.

He leaned back in the coupe and gloomily reflected.

He had been married scarcely a year, yet even in the illusions of the honeymoon, the woman, older than himself and the widow of his old patron, had half unconsciously reasserted herself, and slipped back into the domination of her old position.

It was at first pleasant enough—this half maternal protectorate, which is apt to mingle with the affections of even younger women—and Clarence, in his easy, half feminine intuition of the sex, yielded, as the strong are apt to yield, through the very consciousness of his own superiority. But this is a quality the weaker are not apt to recognize, and the woman who has once tasted equal power with her husband not only does not easily relegate it, but even makes its continuance a test of the affections.

The usual triumphant feminine conclusion: "Then you no longer love me?" had in Clarence's brief experience gone even further and reached its inscrutable climax—"then I no longer love you"—although shown only in a momentary hardening of the eye and voice. And added to this was his sudden but confused remembrance that he had seen that eye and heard that voice in marital altercation during Judge Peyton's life, and that he himself, her boy partisan, had sympathized with her.

Yet, strange to say, this had given him more pain than her occasional other reversions to the past—to her old suspicions of him when he was a youthful protege of her husband's, and a presumed suitor of her adopted daughter Susy.

"High natures are more apt to forgive wrong done to themselves than any abstract injustice. And her capricious tyranny over her dependents and servants, or an unreasoning enmity to a neighbor or friend, outraged his finer sense more than her own misconception of himself. Nor did he dream that this was a thing most women seldom understand, or understanding, ever forgive.

The coupe rattled over the stones or swirled trough the muddy pools of the main thoroughfares. Newspaper and telegraphic offices were still brilliantly lit, and crowds were gathered around the bulletin boards. He knew that news had arrived from Washington that evening of the first active outbreak of secession, and that the city was breathless with excitement.

Had he not just come from the theatre, where certain insignificant allu-

Once Clear of the City Outskirts, He Bullied Redskin Into Irascible Speed.

sions in the play had been suddenly caught up and cheered or hissed by hitherto unknown partisans, to the dumb astonishment of a majority of the audience comfortably settled to money getting and their own affairs! Had he not applauded, albeit half scornfully, the pretty actress—his old playmate Susy—who had audaciously and all incongruously waved the American flag in their faces?

Yes! he had known it; had lived for the last few weeks in an atmosphere electrically surcharged with it—and yet it had chiefly affected him in his personal homelessness. For his wife was a Southerner, a born slaveholder, whose noted prejudices to the North had even outrun her late husband's politics.

At first the piquancy and recklessness of her opinionative speech amused him as part of her characteristic flavor, or as a lingering youthfulness which the maturer intellect always pardons.

He had never taken her politics seriously—why should he?

But when he was compelled to listen to her words echoed and repeated by her friends and family; when he found that with the clannishness of her race she had drawn closer to them in this controversy—that she depended upon them for her intelligence and information rather than upon him—he had awakened to the reality of his situation. He had borne the allusions of her brother, whose old scorn for his dependent childhood had been embittered by his sister's marriage, and was now scarcely concealed.

Yet, while he had never altered his own political faith and social creed in this antagonistic atmosphere, he had often wondered, with his old conscientiousness and characteristic self-abnegation, whether his own political convictions were not merely a revulsion from his domestic tyranny and alien surroundings.

In the midst of this gloomy retrospect the coupe stopped with a jerk before his own house. The door was quickly opened by a servant, who appeared to be awaiting him.

Some one to see you in the library, sir," said the man, "and—" he hesitated and looked toward the coupe.

"Well," said Clarence, impatiently.

"He said, sir, as how you were not to send away the carriage."

"Indeed, and who is it?" demanded Clarence sharply.

"Mr. Hooker. He said I was to say Jim Hooker."

The momentary annoyance in Clarence's face changed to a look of reflective curiosity.

"He said he knew you were at the theatre, and he would wait until you came home," continued the man, dubiously watching his master's face. "He don't know you've come in, sir—and—and I can easily get rid of him."

"No matter. I'll see him—and," added Clarence with a faint smile, "let the carriage wait."

Yet as he turned toward the library he was by no means certain that an interview with the old associate of his boyhood under Judge Peyton's guardianship would divert his mind. Yet he let no trace of his doubts nor of his past gloom show in his face as he entered the room.

Mr. Hooker was apparently examining the elegant furniture and luxurious accommodation with his usual resentful enviousness. Clarence had got a "soft thing." That it was more or less the result of his "artfulness," and that he was unduly "puffed up" by it, was in Hooker's characteristic reasoning equally clear.

As his host smilingly advanced with outstretched hand, Mr. Hooker's efforts to assume a proper abstraction of manner and contemptuous indifference to Clarence's surroundings, which should wound his vanity, ended in his lolling back at full length in the chair with his eyes on the ceiling. But, remembering suddenly that he was really the bearer of a message to Clarence, it struck him that his supine position was, from a theatrical view point, infelicitous.

In his experience of the stage he had never delivered a message in that way. He rose awkwardly to his feet.

"It was so good of you to wait," said Clarence courteously.

"Saw you in the theatre," said Hooker brusquely. "Third row in parquet. Susy said it was you and had suthin' to say to you. Suthin' you ought to know," he continued, with a slight return of his old mystery of manner, which Clarence so well remembered. "You saw her—she fetched the house with that flag business, eh? She knows which way the cat is going to jump—you bet. Yes, sir!" He stopped, glanced around the handsome room and added, darkly, "Mebbe better than this."

With the memory of Hooker's characteristic fondness for mystery still in his mind, Clarence overlooked the innuendo and said smilingly:

"Why didn't you bring Mrs. Hooker here? I should have been honored with her company."

Mr. Hooker frowned slightly at this seeming levity. "Never goes out after a performance. Nervous exhaustion. Left her at our rooms in Market street. We can drive there in ten minutes. That's why I asked the carriage to wait."

Clarence hesitated. Without caring in the least to renew the acquaintance of his old playmate and sweetheart, a meeting that night in some vague way suggested to him a providential diversion. Nor was he deceived by any gravity in the message; with his remembrance of Susy's theatrical tendencies, he was quite prepared for any capricious futile extravagance.

"You are sure we will not disturb her?" he said politely.

"No."

Clarence led the way to the carriage. If Mr. Hooker expected him during the journey to try to divine the purpose of Susy's message he was disappointed. His companion did not allude to it, possibly looking upon it as a combined theatrical performance. Clarence preferred to wait for Susy as the better actor.

The carriage rolled rapidly through the now deserted streets, and at last, under the direction of Mr. Hooker, who was leaning half out of the window, it drew up at a middle-class restaurant, over whose still lit and steaming windows were some ostentatiously public apartments, accessible from a side entrance.

As they ascended the staircase together it became evident that Mr. Hooker was scarcely more at his ease in the character of host than he had been as guest.

He stared gloomily at a descending visitor, grunted audibly at a waiter in the passage, and stopped before a door where a recently deposited tray displayed the half-eaten carcass of a fowl, an empty champagne bottle, two half-filled glasses and faded bouquet. The whole passage was redolent with a singular blending of damp cooking, stale cigarette smoke and patchouli.

Putting the tray aside with his foot, Mr. Hooker opened the door hesitatingly and peered into the room, muttered a few indistinct words, which were followed by a rapid rustling of skirts, and then, with his hand still on the door knob, turning to Clarence, who had discreetly halted on the threshold, pushed the door open theatrically and bade him enter.

"She is somewhere in the suite," he added, with a large wave of the hand toward a door that was still oscillating. "Be here in a minit."

Clarence took in the apartment with a quick glance. Its furniture had the frayed and discolored splendors of a public parlor which had been privately used and maltreated; there were stains in the large medallioned carpet, the gilded veener had been chipped from a heavy centre table, showing the rough, white deal beneath, which gave it the appearance of a stage "property;" the walls panelled with gilt-framed mirrors reflected every domestic detail or private relaxation with shameless publicity.

A damp waterproof shawl and open newspaper were lying across the once brilliant sofa; a powder puff, a plate of fruit and a play book were on the centre table, and on the marble-topped sideboard was Mr. Hooker's second best hat, with a soiled collar, evidently but lately exchanged for the one he had on, peeping over its brim.

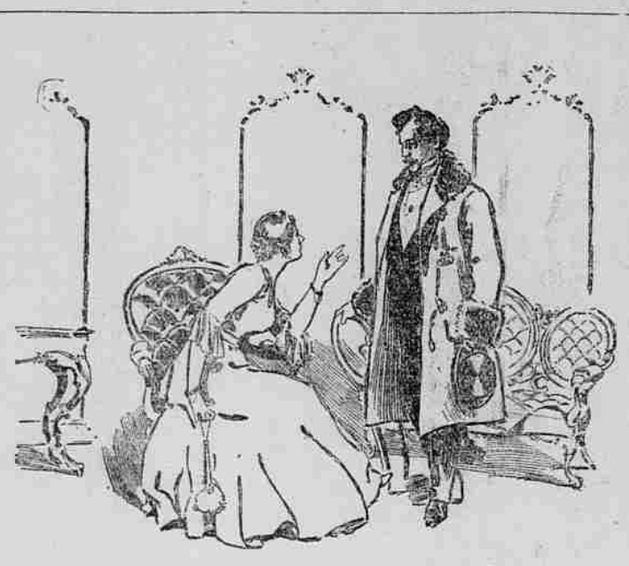
The whole apartment seemed to mingle the furtive disclosures of the dressing room with the open ostentations of the stage, with even a slight suggestion of the auditorium in a few scattered programmes on the floor and chairs.

The inner door opened again with a slight theatrical start, and Susy, in an elaborate dressing gown, moved languidly into the room.

She apparently had not had time to change her underskirt, for there was the dust of the stage on its delicate lace edging as she threw herself into an armchair and crossed her pretty slippered feet before her.

Her face was pale; its pallor incautiously increased by powder, and as Clarence looked at its still youthful, charming outline he was not perhaps sorry that the exquisite pink and white skin beneath, which he had onced kissed, was hidden from that awakened recollection.

Yet there was little trace of the girlish Susy in the pretty but prematurely jaded actress before him, and he felt momentarily relieved. It was her



"LOOK HERE, CLARENCE BRANT, YOU ARE RIGHT."

youth and freshness appealing to his own youth and imagination that he had loved—not her.

Yet as she greeted him with a slight exaggeration of glance, voice and manner, he remembered that even as a girl she was an actress.

Nothing of this, however, was in his voice and manner as he gently thanked her for the opportunity of meeting her again. And he was frank—for the diversion he had expected he had found; he even was conscious of thinking more kinuly of his wife, who had supplanted her.

"I told Jim he must fetch you, if he had to carry you," she said, striking the palm of her hand with her fan, and glancing at her husband; "I reckon he guessed why—though I didn't tell him—I don't tell Jim everything."

Here Jim arose, and, looking at his watch, "guessed he'd run over to the Lick House and get some cigars."

If he was acting upon some hint from his wife his simultation was so badly done that Clarence felt his first sense of uneasiness. But as Hooker closed the door awkwardly and ostentatiously behind him, Clarence smilingly said he had waited to hear the message from her own lips:

"Jim only knows what he's heard outside; the talk of men, you know, and he hears a good deal of that, more, perhaps, than you do. It was that which put me to finding out the truth. And I didn' rest till I did. I'm not to be fooled, Clarence—you don't mind my calling you Clarence, now we're both married and done for—and I'm not the kind to be fooled by anybody from the low countries, and that's the Robles ranch. I'm a Southern woman myself, from Missouri, but I'm for the Union first, last, and all the time, and I call myself a match for any lazy—"

His blood had stirred quickly at the mention of the Robles rancho, but the rest of Susy's speech was too much in the vein of her old extravagance to touch him seriously.

He found himself only considering how strange it was that the old petulance and impulsiveness of her girlhood was actually bringing back with it her pink cheeks and brilliant eyes.

"You surely didn't ask Jim to bring me here," he said smiling, "to tell me that Mrs. Peyton"— he corrected himself hastily as a malicious sparkle came into Susy's blue eyes—"that my wife —was a Southern woman, and probably sympathized with her class? Well, I don't know that I should blame her for that any more than she should blame me for being a Northern man and a Unionist!"

"And she doesn't blame you?" asked Susy sneeringly.

The color came slightly into Clarence's cheek, but before he could reply the actress added:

"No—she prefers to use you!"

"I don't understand you," said Clarence, rising coldly.

"No—you don't understand her!" retorted Susy, sharply. "Look here, Clarence Brant, your're right; I didn't ask you here to tell you—what you and everybody knows—that your wife is a Southerner. I didn't ask you here to tell you what everybody suspects—that she turns you around her little finger. But I did ask you here to tell you, what nobody, not even you suspect, but what I know! And that is that she's a traitor—and more, a spy! And that I've only got to say the word—or send that man Jim to say the word—to have her dragged out of her copperhead den at Robles rancho, and shut up in Fort Alcatraz this very night!"

Still with the pink glowing in her rounding cheeks and eyes snapping like splintered sapphires, she rose to her feet with her pretty shoulders lifted, her small hands and white teeth both tightly clenched, and took a step toward him.

Even in her attitude there was a reminiscence of her wilful childhood, although still blended with the provincial actress whom he had seen on the stage only an hour ago.

Thoroughly alarmed at her threats, in his efforts to conceal his feelings he was not above a weak retaliation.

Stepping back he affected to regard her with a critical admiration that was only half simulated, and said with a smile: "Very well done—but you have forgotten the flag." She did not flinch. Rather accepting the sarcasm as a tribute to her art, she went on with increasing exaggeration:

"It is you who have forgotten the flag—forgotten your country, your people, your manhood—everything. For while you are standing here your wife is gathering under her roof at Robles a gang of spies and traitors like herself.

"Yes! You may smile your superior smile, but I tell you, Clarence Brant, that with all your smartness and book learning you know no more of what goes on around you than a child But others do! This conspiracy is known to the government, and the Federal officers have been warned; General Sumner has been sent out here—and his first act was to change the command at Fort Alcatraz and send your wife's Southern friend—Captain Pinckney—to the right about! Yes—everything is known but one thing—and that is where and how this precious crew meet! That I alone know, and that I have told you."

"And I suppose," said Clarence, with an unchanged smile, "that this valuable information came from your husband—my old friend, Jim Hooker?"

"No," she answered sharply. "It came from Concho—one of your own peons—who is more true to you and the old rancho than you have ever been. He saw what was going on and came to me to warn you."

"But why not to me directly?" said Clarence, with affected incredulity.

"Ask him!" she said viciously. "Perhaps he didn't want to warn the master against the mistress. Perhaps he thought we are still friends. Perhaps—" she hesitated with a lower voice and a forced smile "Perhaps he used to see us together in the old times."

"Very likely," said Clarence quietly, "and for the sake of those old times, Susy," he went on, with a singular gentleness that was quite distinct from his paling face and set eyes, "I am going to forget all that you have just said of me and mine, in all the old wilfulness and impatience that I see you still keep with all your old prettiness." He took his hat from the table and gravely held out his hand.

She was frightened for a moment with his impassive abstraction In the old days she had known it—had believed it was his dogged "obstinacy"—but she knew the hopelessness of opposing it. Yet, with feminine persistency, she again threw herself against it as a wall.

"You don't believe me! Well, go and see for yourself. They are at Robles now! If you catch the early morning stage at Santa Clara you will come upon them before they disperse. Dare you try it?"

"Whatever I do," he returned, smilingly, "I shall always be grateful to you for giving me this opportunity of seeing you again—as you were! Make my excuses to your husband Good night!"

"Clarence!"

But he had already closed the door behind him. His face did not relax its expression, nor change, as he looked again at the tray with its broken viands before the door, the worn, stained hall carpet, or the waiter who shuffled past him.

He was apparently as critically conscious of them and of the close odors of the hall and the atmosphere of listless decay and faded extravagance around him as before the interview.

Had the woman he had just parted from watched him she would have supposed he still utterly disbelieved her story. But no was conscious that all that he saw was a part of his degradation, for he had believed every word she uttered.

Through all her extravagance, envy, and revengfulness, he saw the central truth—that he had been deceived, not by his wife, but by himself He had suspected all this before—this is what had been really troubling him, this was what he had put aside, rather than his faith, not in her, but in his ideal.

He remembered letters that had passbetween her and Captain Pinckney—letters that she had sent openly to notorious Southern leaders, her nervous anxiety to remain at the rancho, the innuendoes and significant glances of friends which he put aside—as he had this woman's message!

Susy had told him nothing new of his wife, but the truth of himself. And the revelation came from people whom he was conscious were the inferior of himself and wife. To an independent, proud, and self-made man it was the culminating stroke.

In the same abstracted voice he told the coachman to drive home.

The return seemed interminable, though he never shifted his position. Yet when he drew up at his own door and looked at his watch he found he had been absent only half an hour. Only half an hour! As he entered the house he turned with the same abstraction toward a mirror in the hall as if he had expected to see some visible change in himself in that time.

Dismissing his servants to bed, he went into his dressing room, completely changed his attire, put on a pair of long riding boots, and, throwing a serape over his shoulders, paused a moment, took a pair of small derringer pistols from a box, put them in his pockets, and then slipped cautiously down the staircase.

A lack of confidence in his own domestics had invaded him for the first time. The lights were out. He opened the door and was in the street.

He walked hastily a few squares to a livery stable, whose proprietor he knew. His first inquiry was for one Redskin—a particular horse; the second for its proprietor. Happily both were in. The proprietor asked no question of a customer of Clarence's condition.

The horse, half Spanish, powerful, and irascible, was quickly saddled. As Clarence mounted, the man in an impulse of sociability said:

"Saw you at the theater tonight, sir."

"Ah," returned Clarence, quietly gathering up the reins.

"Rather a smart trick of that woman with the flag," he said tentatively. Then, with a positive doubt of his customer's politics, he added, with a forced smile, "I reckon it's all party fuss, though—thar ain't any real danger."

But fast as Carence might ride, the words lingered in his ears. He saw through the man's hesitation—he, too, had probably heard that Clarence Brant weakly sympathized with his wife's sentiments—and dared not speak fully. And he understood the cowardly suggestion that there was "no real danger."

It had been Clarence's one fallacy. He had believed the public excitement was only a temporary outbreak of partisan feeling—soon to subside. Even now he was conscious that he was less doubtful of the integrity of the Union than of his own household. It was not the devotion of the patriot, but the indignation of an outraged husband that was spurring him on.

He knew that if he reached Woodville by 5 o'clock he could get ferried across the bay to the embarcado and catch the down coach to Fair Plains, whence he could ride to the rancho. As the coach did not connect directly with San Francisco, the chance of his surprising them was greater.

Once clear of the city outskirts he bullied Redskin into irascible speed, and plunged into the rainy darkness of the high road. The way was familiar.

For a while he was content to feel the buffeting, caused by his rapid pace, of wind and rain against his depressed head and shoulders, in a sheer brutal sense of opposition and power; or to relieve his pent-up excitement by dashing through overflowed gullies in the road, or across the quaggy, sodden edges of meadow land, until he had controlled Redskin's rebellious extravagance into a long, steady stride.

Then he raised his head and straightened himself on the saddle—to think. But to no purpose. He had no plan; everything would depend upon the situation; the thought of forestalling any action of the conspirators, by warning or calling in the authorities, for an instant crossed his mind, but was instantly dismissed.

He had but an instinct, to see with his own eyes what his reason told him was true.

Day was breaking through drifting scud and pewter-colored clouds as he reached Woodville Ferry, checkered with splashes of the soil and the spume of his horse, from whose neck and flanks the sweat rolled like lather.

Yet he was not conscious how intent had been his purpose until he felt a sudden instinctive shock on seeing that the ferryboat was gone! For an instant his wonderful self-possession abandoned him; he could only gaze vacantly at the leaden-colored bay without a thought or expedient, but in another moment he saw that the boat was returning from the distance. Had he lost his only chance?

He glanced hurriedly at his watch; he had come quicker than he imagined; there would still be time. He beckoned impatiently to the ferryman, The boat, a ship's pinnance, with two men in it, crept in with exasperating slowness. At last the two rowers sullenly leaped ashore.

"Ye might have come before the other passenger. We don't reckon to run lightnin' trips on this ferry."

But Clarence was himself again. "Twenty dollars for two more oars in that boat," he said quietly, "and $50 if you get me over in time—to catch the down stage."

The men glanced at Clarence's eyes. "Run up and rouse our Jake and Sam," he said to the other boatman; then leisurely gazing at his customer's travel-stained equipment, he said:

"There must have been a heap o' passengers got left by last night's boat. You're the second man that took this route in a hurry."

At any other time the coincidence might have struck Clarence. But he only answered curtly:

"Unless we are under way in ten minutes you will find I am not the second man, and that our bargain's off."

But here two men emerged from the shanty beside the ferry house and tumbled sleepily into the boat.

Clarence seized an extra pair of sculls that were standing against the shed and threw them into the stern. "I don't mind taking a hand myself for the exercise," he said quietly.

The ferryman glanced again at Clarence's travel-worn figure and determined eyes with mingled approval and surprise. He lingered with his oars lifted, looking at his passenger.

"It ain't no business o' mine, young man," he said deliberately, "but I reckon you understand me when I say that I've just taken another man over there."

"I do," said Clarence impatiently.

"And you still want to go?"

"Certainly," said Clarence, with a cold stare, taking up his oar.

The man shrugged his shoulders, bent himself for the stroke, and the boat sprang forward. The others rowed strong and rapidly, the tough ashen blades springing like steel from the water, the heavy boat seeming to leap in successive bounds until they were fairly beyond the curving inshore current and cleaving the placid, misty surface of the bay.

Clarence did not speak, but bent abstractedly to his oar, the ferryman and his crew rowed in equal panting silence, a few startled ducks whirred before them, but dropped again to rest.

In half an hour they were at the Embarcado. The time was fairly up; Clarence's eyes were eagerly bent for the first appearance of the stage coach around the little promontory, the ferryman was as eagerly scanning the bare, empty street of the still sleeping settlement.

"I don't see him anywhere," said the ferryman with a glance half of astonishment and half of curiosity at his solitary passenger.

"See whom?" said Clarence, carelessly, as he handed the man his promised fee.

"The other man I ferried over to catch the stage. He must have gone on without waiting. You're in luck, young fellow."

"I don't understand you," said Clarence, impatiently. "What has your previous passenger to do with me?"

"Well, I reckon you know best. He's the kind of man, gin'rally speaking, that other men in a powerful hurry don't care to meet, and as a rule I don't foller. It's gin'rally the other way."

"What do you mean?" said Clarence, sternly. "Who are you speaking of?"

"The Chief of Police of San Francisco!"

(To be continued.)

### SHAKESPEARE AND "SHACKS."

[From Notes and Queries.]

I remember that in Oregon, in the time of my boyhood, a very profitable business was carried on in the backwoods where I lived by men who made hakes, or shacks, for the word was pronounced in both ways by the settlers, who brought their language across the plains in the forties from the banks of the Missouri. Although densely wooded, that part of Oregon in which I lived had no sawmills. The only lumber obtainable was that which was split or hewn from the log.

The shake was a board thus split from the fir, cedar or other timber, and was used for the roofing, weather-boarding and flooring of the log cabins of the settlers. The houses called shacks on the plains take their name from the shelters built by the trappers and hunters of the Hudson Bay company with timber split in this way. What is the origin of this old English word, lost in the untimbered homeland to be found again in the needs of the wood dweller of the west? It is not in the "Century Dictionary."

Did the family who lived in Arden get their name from some old hamlet or camp, where the shelters were built or roofed with shakes or shacks, and, therefore, called Shakesborough? There is a pertinent analogy in the Warwickshire name Shackborough, still borne, I believe, by a very worthy family there. The contraction of borough to ber is not uncommon.

### BLACK PEARLS.

[From The Gentleman's Magazine.]

Black pearls used to be held as of small value, comparatively speaking. At the present day a perfect black specimen commands a much higher price than the finest pink or white pearls. They were first made fashionable by the Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III., who possessed a famous necklace of them which fetched £4,000 at an auction after the overthrow of the imperial dynasty. This did not include the single great pearl forming the snap, which was purchased by the Marquis of Bute for £1,000. Mexico, Tahiti, Fiji, and the kingdom of Madura, to the east of Malabar, supply the markets of the world with the best black pearls.

One of the most curious pearls, from many points of view, was that which the traveler Tavernier sold to the ruler of Persia, 200 years ago, for £100,000. It is still in the possession of the Shah of Persia, and is now supposed to be worth at least £135,000. The Persian monarch has a square glass case among his bizarre collection of jewelry containing a vast heap of most magnificent pearls, four or five inches deep, into which one can plunge the hand and spill them in cascades and handfuls.